

Abigail Adams

by Heather Connor

America has been shaped through the years by many people. In the early years of this great country, only men were credited for all the progress and accomplishments. It is evident that women have been crucial to America's progress and development. Every single person who has ever lived on this earth has offered it something. Everyone gives a part of themselves to alter history, whether they inspire someone else or discover something monumental, like America. Women are no exception. Think back on all the great women in American history—Eleanor Roosevelt, Clara Barton, Harriet Tubman, and Susan B. Anthony are a few. Yet the woman who has changed my America the most is not Eleanor Roosevelt or Clara Barton, but Abigail Adams, the wife of John Adams, the second president of the United States.

Abigail Adams is not remembered for being a suffragist. She is not remembered as the fire responsible for the passage of the 19th Amendment, but it only takes a few sparks to start a fire. Abigail Adams certainly deserves credit for being one of these "sparks." She strongly believed that women were not "the weaker sex," and had no patience for such views. She had full confidence in herself and in women as a group, and she refused to be quiet about her convictions. Instead, she spoke frequently and passionately about the rights of women to her husband. The most famous example of this is the letter that Abigail wrote to him on March 31, 1776. She wrote, "In the new code of laws...I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands... If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

Although Abigail stood by her husband and defended him whenever necessary, she wouldn't stand in his shadow. While she didn't receive a formal education, she was constantly learning and always had an interest in politics. Whenever John Adams was away from their Massachusetts farm, all responsibilities for running the farm became Abigail's. She helped raise the fourth president of the United States, John Quincy Adams.

Abigail Adams was a prominent advocate for women's rights. She inspired women to look for something better than what they were being given. She demonstrated through her example that women can have their own opinions and ideas and still be effective as a wife and mother. She is remembered for her political influence and precocious suffragist attitude. The power of her ideas gathered strength and momentum until August of 1920, when the 19th Amendment was passed. Thoughts have no power until they are spoken and then carried out. Abigail Adams inspires me to formulate opinions and then act on them. Because of great women in history, every American girl's voice can be heard.